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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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FROM : Amembassy OUAGADOUGOU DATE: February 15, 1966

SUBJECT : Monthly Summary - January 1966.

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REVIEWED BY EM DATE 3 MAR 1982

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1. President Yameogo Forced to Resign by Popular Discontent (CONF)

Union protests over President Yameogo's twenty percent cut in civil service salaries on New Year's Eve, capped by the Government's vigorous suppression of a union meeting the same evening, led to a general strike on January 3. It was a complete success in both public and private sectors in Ouagadougou. Sympathy strikes were also held in many of the regional centers. At the capital, some 3-4,000 strikers and demonstrators marched on the Presidential Palace calling for the Army to assume power. It appears that the general strike was intended from the first to unseat Yameogo (Embtels 212, 213, 216).

The Army remained loyal to the President and protected the Palace from growing masses of demonstrators. Tear gas was frequently used. President Yameogo apparently remained inflexible and refused to meet or negotiate with the strikers. At the end of the day, Col. Sangoule Lamizana, the Army Chief of Staff, informed the President that the Army could no longer control the situation. Yameogo dictated a resignation statement and Col. Lamizana then announced that he had accepted power in the name of the Army (Embtels 217, 218).

Yameogo left Ouagadougou early in the morning of January 4 under Army "protection," apparently headed by car for exile in the Ivory Coast. He reportedly chose, however, to stay in the country in hopes of being able to return to power. He has since remained under Army guard in Ouagadougou.

Yameogo's fate appears still undecided. The coup leaders consider him too dangerous to permit him exile. They want him tried and imprisoned for misuse of Government funds. Col. Lamizana apparently wishes to avoid political agitation and has neither directly criticized the ex-President or charged him with any offense. The Government appears growing in confidence and may ultimately permit him exile.

2. New Government Formed - Changes in the Civil Service (CONF)

Following his assumption of power, Col. Lamizana suspended the Constitution and dissolved the National Assembly on January 5 in line with the demands of the coup leaders. Simultaneously, he repeated his earlier promises of January 3 that Upper Volta would respect all international commitments and follow a foreign policy similar to that of the previous Government (Embtels 220, 233, 237).

A new Government was named January 8. It contained eight military and five civilian members. The following day, Colonel Lamizana addressed the nation and explained that he had not wished to take power but had been forced to do so by the situation. He emphasized that Upper Volta was in very poor financial shape and stressed the need of national unity so that the nation could concentrate upon economic development with the assistance of outside aid (Embtels 249, 250, 251).

Later in the month, the Directors and Chiefs of Ministerial cabinets were replaced. There followed a general reshuffling of the Commandants de Cercle (local administrators). The changes removed those with strong attachments to the old regime and brought in people who had opposed Yameogo or who had recognized technical skills (Embtel 263 and A-167).

On January 28, the Government dissolved the municipal Councils whose members had been nominated by the Yameogo's UDV/RDA party and duly elected at the end of 1965 without opposition candidates. A widely based Consultative Committee of 10 military and 31 civilians was named on February 1. It apparently is to serve as a substitute National Assembly as long as Col. Lamizana remains in power (A-166).

3. Trade Unions Play a Key Role in Ousting President Yameogo (CONF)

Upper Volta's three major labor federations and seven minor trade unions acted with rare solidarity and precision as the catalyst of the January 3 coup d'etat. (They represent some 10,000 of a total of 32,000 wage and salary earners). Forewarned of the President's salary cuts, the unions formed a ten man Action Committee. It directed the strike and negotiated with the Army on the formation of a new Government.

After the Army took power, the Action Committee presented a list of twelve demands (Embtel 232). The major ones were for the arrest of the President, Ministers and other major Governmental figures; the dissolution of the National Assembly; abbrogation of the Yameogo budget; reformation of the Municipal Councils; and an audit of misused state property and funds. Most of these have been met by the Lamizana Government.

The Committee was enlarged to twenty members, all unionists, on January 21 (A-154). While it has continued to meet with Col. Lamizana and express its views, the Committee's direct political influence appears somewhat eclipsed. The Government has shown increasing confidence and initiative. The Cabinet has been meeting regularly, assuming the usual responsibilities of Government direction. Finally, the formation of the Consultative Committee on February 1 (five of whose members are leading unionists) creates a body likely to supersede the advisory role of the Action Committee. The unions have maintained their unity, however, and probably now constitute the best organized and most effective civilian pressure group in Upper Volta.

4. Upper Volta's Financial Problems Grow More Serious (CONF)

Prior to the coup, there was cautious criticism of Yameogo's heavy personal expenditures and concern for the country's financial condition. The French have been steadily cutting their financial assistance, which has declined from about $4.8 million in 1964 to $1.2 million in 1966 (A-163). The French have probably been asked by

the new Government to provide more help than was projected for the previous regime, but there is no current indication that they will do so.

The new Government is seriously concerned with economic problems and has set financial stability as its major goal. Among its first steps, the Government abolished official cars for ministers, maintained former pay scales for all those assigned to higher positions in the governmental reshuffle, and cracked down on over-priced items on the local market.

In an attempt to reassure the private sector, Col. Lamizana spoke to the Chamber of Commerce on January 21 (A-155). He assured local businessmen that the Army would maintain order and was anxious to encourage private enterprise. The Colonel promised that he would attempt to resolve the admittedly poor financial situation and asked for the confidence and cooperation of the private sector. He ended with a plea for continued aid from Upper Volta's foreign friends.

5. Upper Volta Attends OCAM and Entente Meetings and Sends Mission to Niger (LOU)

Newly appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Pierre Ilboudo led the Upper Volta delegation to the January 12-18 OCAM Conference in Tananarive. He was particularly impressed by progress made toward economic cooperation among the member states (Embtel 276). Upper Volta also participated in the January 15-16 Entente Meeting in Abidjan. The delegation was led by Edouard Ouedraogo, Minister of Public Works, Posts and Telecommunications. On January 25, Col. Lamizana sent Minister of Public Health, Population and National Education, Bakary Traore to Niger. The mission reportedly explained Lamizana's intention to visit Houphouet-Boigny early in February and cleared up a misunderstanding over President Diori's expressed wish to visit Upper Volta.

6. Labor Training Seminar Held in Ouagadougou (UNCL)

The International Labor Organization held a seminar in Ouagadougou January 17 to February 2. The siminar was directed by Mr. Clermont, ILO representative from Cotonou. It counseled twenty local trade unionists in union management and worker organization.

7. Measles Campaign (UNCL)

After overcoming a series of logistic problems, the Upper Volta Endemic Disease Service late in January launched its campaign to vaccinate children against one of Africa's most fatal diseases--measles.

It is planned that 450,000 children will be vaccinated before the epidemic season sets in in April. The vaccine and part of the equipment have been supplied by AID under a regional program.

For the Charge d'Affaires ad interim:

George R. Martens
Third Secretary of Embassy